

DESERT WHEATEARS *OENANTHE DESERTI* IN ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA Desert Wheatears *Oenanthe deserti* overwinter in parts of Ethiopia and Somalia, but the limits of their distribution are not well known. They are said to be common in NE Ethiopia (Urban & Brown 1971) and in (ex-British) Somaliland, "but it does not penetrate as far south as the Equator" (Archer & Godman 1961). White (1962) states that it winters in both countries (two races), but according to Moreau (1972) only one race is involved. There are no certain records further south in Kenya and Uganda (Britton 1980).

DISTRIBUTION IN ETHIOPIA

The species occurs mainly in the sandy coastal plains of Eritrea, where it is also found in the west of the country up to 1300 m in open acacia country (Moreau 1972). Further south I found it to be regular in small numbers in the Awash valley in the Danakil north of 10°30'N and in the area round the Djibouti and Somali borders to 10°N. There are a few scattered records outside this area: a male collected and identified by Patrizi (?1941) at Addis Ababa (and thus at about 2300 m); it is included in Hay's (1969) list of the birds of the Awash National Park as a winter visitor; and another from an area just north of the Park from a plot on my unpublished distribution maps, but I do not have a note of the original reference.

DISTRIBUTION IN SOMALIA

In northern (ex-British) Somalia, where it occurs in great numbers, the majority are on the coastal plain, but they also occur on the central plateau up to 240 km from the sea (Archer & Godman 1961). However, further east and south I have not been able to trace any records at all in ex-Italian Somaliland, although presumably it should be as common in the north as it is further to the west, for it also occurs on Socotra. In the past two winters I have found several birds in the Mogadishu area, which opens up the possibility that probably they occur further north throughout coastal Somalia. As these birds, all males, extend the known wintering range by some 1000 km southwards, they are recorded below in detail:

Hal Hambo (1°54'N, 45°05'E), 32 km southwest of Mogadishu, 1 on 14 and 21 December 1979.

Mallable (2°12'N, 45°37'E), 35 km northeast of Mogadishu, 1 on 11 January 1980.

Buntapsi (1°53'N, 45°04'E), 34 km southwest of Mogadishu, 1 on 8 February 1980.

near Gezira (1°57'N, 45°11'E), 21 km southwest of Mogadishu, 1 on 15 February 1980.

12 km northeast of Mogadishu (2°05'N, 45°26'E), 1 on 16 February 1980.

Gezira, 2 on 10 January 1981.

SUBSPECIES

Desert Wheatears have been separated into four races, nominate, *atrogularis*, *oreophilus* and *homochroa*. According to Moreau (1972) *deserti* and *homochroa* are mainly sedentary in the northern part of the desert belt, *oreophilus* winters in Iran and Arabia and *atrogularis* winters from India westwards to Lake Chad. Birds in Ethiopia and Somalia therefore should be *atrogularis*. However, White (1962) lists *deserti* only for Ethiopia and British Somaliland, *atrogularis* for Somaliland [*sic*] and *oreophila* [*sic*] for southern Arabia and Socotra. Urban & Brown (1971) follow White in listing only *deserti* for Ethiopia, and Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1960) and Archer & Godman (1961) also agree

in listing only *deserti*. It would thus be of interest to know the basis for White's inclusion of *atrogularis* in Somalia. I was impressed by the brownish-buff colouration of the upperparts of the birds I saw in southern Somalia, appearing appreciably darker than the birds (*deserti*) that I know well in Ethiopia and North Africa. Presumably they are either *oreophilus* or *atrogularis*, the former being more likely, but a specimen is needed to settle the question.

DATES

Smith (1957) states that birds are present in Eritrea from the last week of September to the end of March; Archer & Godman's extreme dates are 20 September - 17 March. My own for these countries fall within these periods.

REFERENCES

- ARCHER, G. & GODMAN, E.M. 1961. *The birds of British Somaliland and the Gulf of Aden*. Vol. 4. Edinburgh & London: Oliver & Boyd.
- HAY, P.W. 1969. Check list of the birds of Awash Park and Basaaka area. Special Mimeo. Report. Imperial Ethiopian Government Wild Life Conservation Department, pp. 1-16.
- PATRIZI, S. (?1941). Governo Generale dell'A.O.I. Divezione Superiore CC. LL. Ispettorato della Caccia. Registro Inventario della Raccolta Zoologica. 1938-1941. (Unpublished MS).
- SMITH, K.D. 1957. An annotated check list of the birds of Eritrea. *Ibis* 99: 1-26.
- URBAN, E.K. & BROWN, L.H. 1971. *A checklist of the birds of Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa: Haile Sellassie I University Press.
- WHITE, C.M.N. 1962. *A revised check list of African shrikes.....etc.* Lusaka: Government Printer.
- J.S. Ash, Division of Birds, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560, U.S.A. Received 20 February 1981
- Scopus* 5: 35-36, March 1981

MAPPING SCHEMES IN THE AFROTROPICAL REGION One of the notable developments in Afrotropical ornithology in the past decade has been the initiation of schemes to map the distribution of birds. As a result of this interest, an informal meeting was held at the 5th Pan-African Ornithological Congress, Malawi, 1980, to discuss the topic. The main objectives of these schemes have been to establish a baseline upon which to measure future trends, but valuable data have also been accumulated to indicate changes in distribution during the past century, and longer. Fortunately, most schemes have followed the Ethiopian model (Ash 1972), which was begun in 1969. Consequently they are compatible, and can be used in the future for an Atlas of the Afrotropical region.

The Hall & Moreau (1970) *Atlas* did much to stimulate interest in mapping, to which the Snow (1978) *Atlas* has provided added impetus. Already further countries have plans for an Atlas, and clearly, others will follow. Obviously it is desirable for all Atlases to adopt the same basic format, and for this reason we present here a list of schemes known to us, together with information on the year started, status, progress and people/organizations involved.

PROPOSED FORMAT

We believe that the following suggestions should apply to all future projects. They are divided into two groups: the essential minimum, and what we have termed 'optional data'. The latter category embraces various additional